

DECORATIVE STRIP FOR KITCHEN APPLIANCES

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to decorative strips for kitchen appliances. In particular, the present invention relates to a decorative ceramic strip adhesively applied to the frame or trim of a kitchen appliance such as a microwave oven.

2. The Prior Art

Certain decorative pieces are known in the prior art. For instance, 2002/0050107 A1 relates in relevant part to a trim component system, wherein each trim component includes at least one tile adhered to a backing member. The tile may be natural stone, synthetic stone or ceramic material. In one embodiment, three trim components are present as a fireplace surround. U.S. Patent No. 5,078,815 relates in relevant part to a method of making a decorative, transparent laminate comprised of a thin layer of stone bonded by an adhesive to a transparent, rigid substrate material. U.S. 5,004,512 relates in relevant part to a method of making a stone veneer panel including finishing one face of a slab of stone material; placing the slab finished face down on a support plate; machining the unfinished face to obtain a predetermined thickness of the slab; and bonding a backing sheet to the unfinished face of the stone slab to produce a composite stone veneer panel. Moreover, U.S. Patent No. 4,664,955 relates in relevant part a composite laminate for use in the paneling of walls, ceilings and other surfaces such as furniture and the like comprises a polymeric sheet-like core having a pair of surfaces to which are bonded a metal foil so as to form a sandwich-type structure and wherein a lamina of natural facing stone is uniformly bonded to at least one of the pair of metal foils.

Finally, U.S. Patent No. 3,950,795 relates in relevant part to a decorative cover in the form of decorative material such a textile for the exterior side of a bathtub. The back side of the

cover is applied to a plastic sheet carrying adhesive on each side whereby one side of the sheet is adhesively secured to the back side of the cover and the other side of the sheet may be pressed against the outer wall or side of the bathtub to be adhesively secured thereto.

However, the prior art does not solve the problem in which kitchen appliances do not match or actually clash with the décor of a kitchen environment. Thus, there is a strong need in the art for a decorative system for a kitchen appliance comprising decorative elements such as a ceramic element or strip which may be affixed to a chosen exterior surface of a kitchen appliance in order to match the look of kitchen appliance with the décor of the kitchen itself and/or with the plates, dishes, cups, etc. in the kitchen.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is therefore a principle object of the invention to provide decorative elements to be affixed upon a kitchen appliance so as to match the look of the kitchen appliance with the decor of the kitchen itself and/or with the plates, dishes, cups in the kitchen.

It is another object of the present invention to replace the conventional metallic decorum of a kitchen appliance such as a microwave oven with ceramic decorative strips in order to match this appliance to other parts of the kitchen.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a kitchen appliance with decorative strips which are adhesively bonded to the appliance.

It is yet another object of the present invention to provide a kitchen appliance with ceramic decorative strips in order to give the appliance more of a retro feeling.

It is yet another object of the present invention to provide a kitchen appliance with decorative ceramic strips to make the surface of the appliance easier to clean relative to conventional kitchen appliances.

It is a further object of the present invention to provide improved insulation to a kitchen appliance relative to conventional kitchen appliances, through use of ceramic decorative strips affixed thereon.

In accordance with the present invention, a decorative system for a kitchen appliance, such as a microwave oven is provided. The decorative system includes a decorative element and bonding means. The decorative element is bonded to an exterior surface of the kitchen appliance via the bonding means and the decorative element is of the form to provide the kitchen appliance with a look which matches a decor of a kitchen in which the kitchen appliance is located. In addition, the decorative element is of the form to make the appliance easier to clean and also improve the insulation of the kitchen appliance relative to conventional kitchen appliances.

The expression "conventional" kitchen appliances as used herein refers to kitchen appliances without the decorative or ceramic elements of the present invention affixed thereon.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a perspective view of a conventional microwave oven with metal decor;

Fig. 2 is a perspective view of a microwave oven with the ceramic decor of the present invention;

Fig. 3 is a perspective view of a microwave oven with ceramic pattern décor of the present invention;

Fig. 4 is a cross-sectional view of the microwave oven/ceramic strip attachment of the present invention in Fig. 2 in the direction of arrows 4-4;

Fig. 5 is a fragmentary view of the ceramic strip, adhesive tape and microwave oven surface of the present invention;

Fig. 6 is a cross-sectional view of the microwave oven/ceramic strip attachment of the present invention in Fig. 2 in the direction of arrows 6-6;

Fig. 7 is a cross-sectional view of the microwave oven/ceramic strip attachment of the present invention in Fig. 2 in the direction of arrows 7-7; and

Fig. 8 is a cross-sectional view of the microwave oven/ceramic strip attachment of the present invention in Fig. 2 in the direction of arrow 8.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The present invention relates to a decorative system for a kitchen appliance. Specifically, the decorative system of the present invention provides a kitchen appliance with a look which matches a decor of the kitchen in which the appliance is located, makes the appliance easier to clean, and improves the insulation of the appliance relative to conventional kitchen appliances. However, it is noted that the decorative system of the present invention is not limited to any particular kitchen appliance but rather also encompasses any such kitchen appliance which would work in the same manner as described herein.

Referring to the figures, Fig. 1 depicts a conventional prior art microwave oven having only a metallic décor without the decorative system of the present invention. Turning to Figs. 2-8, the decorative system of the present invention for a kitchen appliance is referred to generally as reference numeral **10** in these drawings.

The decorative system **10** of the present invention for a kitchen appliance includes at least one decorative element **12**. In a preferred embodiment of the present invention as illustrated in Figs. 2-8, the kitchen appliance is a microwave oven **11** and the decorative element **12** is preferably a ceramic element such as a ceramic strip. The ceramic elements or strips **12** only represent a preferred embodiment of the present invention and thus other materials which accomplish the same purposes are considered to be within the scope of the present invention. As shown in Fig. 3, the ceramic element or strip **12** may also contain decorative patterns **13** thereon to match the décor of the microwave to the kitchen décor or environment. The decorative pattern **13** may be placed onto the ceramic elements or strips **12** using painting techniques or any other technique known in the art for designing ceramic pieces which would also be in conformance with the purposes of the present invention described herein.

Moreover, as illustrated in Figs. 2-3, it is preferable to have a plurality of variably sized and shaped ceramic elements or strips **12** to be affixed onto different areas of the exterior surface of the microwave **11** to provide a look or décor for the microwave oven **11** which matches the décor of the kitchen décor itself and/or matches the plates, dishes, cups, etc. in the kitchen. For example, as depicted in Figs. 2 and 3, the ceramic elements or strips **12** are

designed so as to fit on the top face **16** and bottom face **18** of the frontal exterior of the microwave oven **11**. In addition, ceramic elements or strips **12** are designed to be affixed onto the panel above **20** and onto the panel below **22** the keypad **24** of the microwave oven **11**. In addition, a ceramic element or strip **12** could also be designed for being affixed over the entire keypad **24** of the microwave oven **11** and contain openings therein to allow the user of the microwave **11** to use the keypad **24** through the openings in ceramic element or strip **12**. The above serve only as examples of preferred places in which the ceramic elements or strips **12** may be placed on the microwave oven **11** kitchen appliance and are in no way meant to limit the scope of the present invention. Lastly, the shapes and sizes of the ceramic elements or strips **12** are to be of the proper dimensions such as the proper length, width, height and thickness so that they are able to be affixed onto the exterior surfaces **26** of a chosen kitchen appliance, e.g. a microwave oven **11**.

Further, as illustrated in Figs. 4-8, (especially in Fig. 5), the ceramic element or strip **12** is affixed to the exterior surface of the microwave **11** via a bonding or adhesive means, such as double sided adhesive sticky tape **28**. As illustrated in Figs 4-8, when the decorative system **10** is assembled, one side of the double sided tape **28** is located on ceramic element or strip **12** and the other side of the double sided tape **28** is located on the chosen exterior surface **26** of the microwave oven **11** for connecting the ceramic element or strip **12** with the chosen exterior surface **26** of the microwave oven **11**. It is noted that the present invention is not limited to double sided adhesive sticky tape **28** and that other bonding means which are known in the art for accomplishing the purposes of the present invention are also contemplated to be within its scope.

The ceramic elements or strips **12** may be produced by any conventional methods known in the art for producing ceramic elements or strips **12** which would function for the purposes of the present invention described herein. The ceramic elements **12** should be so shaped and sized as to be appropriate for use with the kitchen appliances they are to be affixed onto.

It is also preferred, as illustrated in Figs. 5 and 7, to have protective elements or rims **30** located along the outer edges of the ceramic elements or strips **12** to protect the ceramic elements

or strips **12**. These protective rims **30** protect the ceramic elements or strips **12** by wrapping around the edges of the ceramic elements **12** to provide cushioning for these elements **12**. It is preferred that these protective rims **30** are composed of rubber. In using the decorative system of the presently claimed invention illustrated in Figs: 2 and 3, a user would first select at least one ceramic element **12** to affix onto a chosen exterior surface **26** of the microwave oven **11**. The user would then apply bonding means to the chosen ceramic element **12** and/or to the chosen exterior surface **26** of the microwave oven **11** in order to connect the ceramic element or strip **12** with the chosen exterior surface **26**. In the case of using double sided adhesive sticky tape **28** as the bonding means, as illustrated in figs 4-8, the user would place one sticky end of the double sided adhesive sticky tape **28** on either the bottom side of the ceramic element or strip **12** or alternatively on the chosen exterior surface **26** of the microwave **11**. This would leave one sticky side free to connect with either the chosen exterior surface **26** of the microwave oven **11** or the bottom of the ceramic element or strip **12**, depending on where the sticky end of the adhesion tape **28** was placed. Next, the user would then affix the free sticky end of double sided adhesive tape **28** which is attached to either the bottom of ceramic strip **12** or the exterior surface of the microwave **11**, so as to connect the ceramic strip **12** with the exterior surface **26** of the microwave **11**. Finally, if desired, the user would repeat the above steps with another ceramic element or strip **12**.

The particulars embodiment described above is not meant to be exclusive. Many other variations of the present invention would be obvious to those skilled in the art, and are contemplated to be within the scope of the appended claims.